1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

attitude toward one's blood relations than by quoting Mrs. Hoernlé:

> Here, then, is a large body of kin drawn intimately into contact with the lives of each generation. Looking out into the world from his own home, the Bantu child knows where he may seek hospitality and succour of every kind; where, also, he may of right be called upon to render assistance in case of need. The barriers of reserve shutting off human beings from one another are largely down so far as these classes of relatives are concerned, so that for economic assistance, for friendly counsel, in time of sorrow and in time of joy, these are the natural categories of people to turn to, the core of people with whom one is close-knit from birth in a web of reciprocal rights and duties.[1]

The Kin

Relatives by Marriage. Marriage profoundly alters the relationship of those who enter into it, that is, the two families. It must be entered into with great care and with due regard for all factors concerned in order that the balance of life may be maintained. It seems that the financial arrangements (*ilombo*) are designed to restore to the bride's family an equivalence for her loss, since marriage is patrilocal. The Ovimbundu consider mutual respect between the two families to be a necessary basis for a successful marriage. Respect (*esumbilo*) is the reason assigned by thoughtful Ovimbundu for the various avoidances (*oku liyuvuila*) enjoined upon the principals and their respective families. In the first place, the husband and wife must show their respect for each other by avoiding certain actions as, for example, either one speaking the name of the other.

This mutual respect finds its most dramatic symbol in the treatment which the husband must accord his mother-in-law, the bride her father-in-law. They must avoid seeing each other, and if it is necessary to converse, it must be done out of sight, or with gaze averted. Both husband and wife must also avoid pronouncing the names of the parents-in-law. By the principle of extended relationships, this behaviour applies to the relations of the husband and the wife with *all* their parents-in-law of the opposite sex. As all the mother's 'sisters' are 'mother', so to the husband they are all *ndetembo* (mother-in-law). Likewise, the father's 'brothers' all

[1] In Schapera, op. cit., 1937, p. 73.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

606 being 'father', to the wife they are *ndatembo* (father-in-law). All relatives whom one considers as 'parents' are parents-in-law to one's spouse, and conversely, all whom one considers as one's 'children' are *ndatembo* (sons-in-law or daughters-in-law) to the spouse. To all these relatives-in-law is due the same pattern of respectful behaviour. Avoidance of seeing each other applies only between the *va ndatembo* of opposite sex. There is the additional prohibition that they may not eat in each other's presence. This avoidance is further extended to include one's *ndatembo* of the same sex, and also one's *nãwã* (relatives-in-law of one's own generation). With the *nãwã*, however, one is otherwise on free and easy terms.[1] The prohibition on eating does not apply to drinking beer or to other such casual refreshment, but only to 'hot food', i.e. to regular meals.

606 788 Avoidance of meeting (*oku liyuvuila kocipala*, lit. 'avoiding each other to the face') is especially difficult for the bride who comes to live in a village of her husband's people, a large proportion of the men of which may be *ndatembo* to her. The prohibition may be lifted by going through a simple ceremony in which each rubs a little oil on the other. The woman rubs oil on the breast, the face, and the right arm of her *ndatembo*, while he in turn rubs oil from the same dish on her breast and on the braids of her forehead. Avoidance of eating in each other's presence may be done away with after some months by sacrificing a chicken and feeding it ceremonially together with maize porridge to the *ndatembo* or *nãwã* (throwing it into her mouth, mouthful by mouthful), with the attendance of the immediate family. It is especially important that these ceremonies be carried through with respect (*esumbilo*).

The avoidance of the name, whether of husband and wife, or of the parents-in-law, must be maintained: the names must not be pronounced. Many euphemisms are resorted to when it becomes 606 necessary to speak of or to these relatives-in-law. This is one 551 reason why the parents themselves take the name of their first-born, prefixing *Na*, 'mother of', and *Sa*, 'father of'. Thus the parents of *Kambõtiã* are known as *Nakambõtiã* and *Sakambõtiã*. This name may be pronounced. This is also probably one reason for extend-

[1] See the folk-tale in which the man who knows the speech of the red ants gives away his knowledge by laughing out *while his sister-in-law is braiding his hair*.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

ing to the wife all the relationships which are the husband's and vice versa. Thus by courtesy the parents-in-law are spoken of not as *ndatembo*, but *Mai* (my mother) and *Tate* (my father). The same extension also applies to all of the kin of the spouse and for all kinship terms both direct and reciprocal. Another reason for this is the mutual respect which is a principal basis of the Umbundu marriage.[1]

There remains one important matter necessary to an understanding of the Umbundu concept of relationship by marriage. To the Ovimbundu the proper, or at least the most desirable, marriage is a marriage within the circle of kin. 'Formerly people never married unless they were related, that is to say, unless they touched the blood together. If in the mother's kin (*koluina*), only on the side of the bow (i.e. male line). If in the father's kin (*koluse*), only on the side of the basket (i.e. female line).'[2] Upon closer consideration it becomes evident which of the relatives one may marry. It would not be possible to marry any who are classed as brother, sister, father, mother, grandparent, child, or grandchild, for such a union would involve incest (*oku ndõ*). The relatives whom one may marry are, then, those of one's own age-level who belong to classes other than the above-mentioned. An ideal mate of one's own generation is a cross-cousin classed as *Epalume* or *Cepua* (Class A. 4, p. 47). Beside this, a woman may marry one classed as her mother's brother (Class D. 3, p. 48), and a man one classed as his father's sister (Class D. 4, p. 48), if of appropriate age. One may also marry an *ocimumba* (Class J. 2, p. 49). Hambly remarked that 'cross-cousin marriage . . . is the functional form among the Ovimbundu'.[3] This is true, but only in part, for not only are there many relatives other than his cross-cousin whom an Ocimbundu may marry, but the financial arrangements are quite other than those usually associated with the cross-cousin marriage.

[1] While I do not pretend to believe that 'respect' is the only or even the main reason for the observances described, it seems sufficiently important to receive the attention which I have given it.

[2] Verbatim translation of statement by Likuluta Samikanjo, elder of the school village at Ngendo (Kasonge).

[3] Hambly, op. cit., p. 194. In reporting the replies of his informant as to whom he could marry, with regard to the marriage of father's sister's daughter, the reply was that it was possible but not desirable 'because the children will be stupid'. The reason assigned was evidently taken from European ideas, but the reply also indicates a preference for marriage *within* the *oluina*, which I have also had from many but not from all informants.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

hood was a day when he and an elder brother set off for the fields and almost ran into a party of raiders. The scolding which they received was not forgotten.

The practice of leaving the *ocisembe* in the village by day makes his elder sibling responsible for much of his education. This is the beginning of a close bond which lasts through life. She herself may not be more than six or seven years old and consequently cannot be expected to 'educate' her little charge very thoroughly. She interests herself in his walking and talking and he will imitate her in many things, but the rest of 'conscious education' must be attended to by the parents.

Cleanliness. Instruction in cleanliness begins at this age, but I fear that it is lacking either in intensity or in persistence for its effect seems to be rather long-delayed. Small babies are not washed very often but their bodies and heads are anointed with palm-oil against infestation with the various parasites of the tropics. Anointing the body continues to be a part of the toilet of the Ocimbundu through life. When palm-oil is scarce, such afflictions as common itch are more prevalent. Nowadays, in the well-appointed household, the *ocisembe* has his hands and face washed before breakfast. If such a connexion between washing and eating were always and everywhere maintained, habits of personal cleanliness might be more widespread. Brushing the teeth may be begun in imitation of mother. Sphincter training is begun very early, for the mother feels every muscular movement made or attempted by the baby on her back. Hence she is apt to know when it is necessary to take him down for defecation. If and when this procedure is followed through with regularity and persistence early sphincter control may be established, but too often this is not the case. Establishment of bladder control is apt to come even more uncertainly as a favourite proverb concerning the weather indicates:

Ilu lia soka ndetaho lioñaña.
The sky is like the bottom of a baby.

The Ovimbundu do not associate these bodily functions with shame to the extent which is the case in our culture, but euphemisms are used in place of the exact terminology.[1] If an

[1] There are prohibitions regarding these functions during visits to relatives-in-law with whom one has respect-relations, also to the bride during the wedding ceremonies. (See Folk-tales nos. 12 and 13 of the short collection in the *Journal*

1: Childl xl-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

863 *ocisimbe* defecates on the bed he will be slapped that he may not repeat, but less flagrant breaches do not seem to call for punishment.

868 *Language.* The progress of toddlers in language mastery is rapid. Some mispronunciations are allowed. Some children pronounce correctly more rapidly than do others. Correct use of the language including mastery of the complicated grammatical structure, however, is mastered much earlier than is the case with English-speaking children. One could almost say as does Father Van Wing of the Kongo child: 'À quatre ans il parle mieux sa belle langue Kikongo, qu'un Européen de douze ans ne parle la sienne.'[1] The baby's earliest babblings, as well as his later evident imitations of his elders, are all recognized as his attempts at self-expression which as a matter of course will straighten themselves out in due time.[2] Parents speak to their children in a tone distinctly different from that employed in ordinary adult conversation, but they rarely if ever use the baby's own mispronunciations or 'baby-talk' as do Europeans and Americans. This, and the fact that young children have much more practice than have our children, owing to the constant companionship of their elders, seems to be the secret of their rapid progress. Whether the nature of the language itself has any effect would be an interesting subject for investigation.

867 *Manners* are also taken on quickly during this time. Toddlers are not expected to practise any very wide range of the social niceties, but what they do, they do correctly. They give and receive with both hands. They both give and answer greetings with proper terms of respect. An outsider, however, can rarely observe such behaviour naturally in the young child. He has been so

606 514 *of the American Folk-Lore Society*, vol. xxxv, pp. 129 ff.) The terms used are as follows:

Exact terms	*Euphemisms*
To urinate, *oku sūsū* (urine, *ovūsū*)	*oku talamēlāho*, lit. 'to stand to something'.
	oku litapela, lit. 'to water oneself' (said of a child when it wets itself or its bed).
To defecate, *oku nia* (feces, *eniña*)	*oku enda kusenge*, lit. 'to go to the bush'.
	oku enda kafeka, lit. 'to go to the country'.

The verb *oku nia* is used as a strong or profane expletive or interjectory phrase, especially in the first person with *etaili* (to-day), as *Etaili nda nia.* The verb is commonly left off.

Études Bakongo, p. 262.

Cf. the proverb: *Wa sema, wa imba: wa tumbuka, wa popia*, 'He mispronounces, he sings: he babbles, he speaks.'

582 incest *(oku ndo)*. But one may marry relatives of one's own age-level who belong to classes other than those mentioned, i.e. cross-cousins and, on other age-levels, father's sister or sister's daughter. It is said that formerly marriage never took place except between persons who could trace relationship in this way. Today this principle is very liberal in its application.(1) (It would be interesting to have estimates of the number of men who do marry first degree cross-cousins, father's sisters, or sister's daughters, as distinct from classificatory relatives of these classes, and the number who marry outside the *oluse* or *oluina*.)

583 Marriage was formerly arranged by the mother's brother (i.e. by the *oluina*), but today there is a tendency for fathers to arrange their daughters' marriages and to receive their marriage payment. (And also, occasionally, to assist their sons in providing marriage payment.)(2) *Ilombo*, or marriage payment, was formerly paid in cattle, blankets etc.(3) Today it is usually paid in cash, the amount being determined by the status of the bride.(4)

Polygyny

621 595 In the sample village (Ngendo, Kasongi chiefdom) described by Childs, of a total of 48 households,

(a) 10 households were polygynous; of these 9 contained only 2 wives or concubines, and the tenth, that of the headman, contained four wives and one concubine,

(b) 27 households were monogynous, and 3 more were occupied by widowers, all formerly monogynous. (The remaining households were occupied by 7 widows and one young unmarried man.)

Childs notes that the proportion of polygynous households in Kasongi chiefdom is probably higher than in other parts of Ovimbundu country for two reasons: the comparatively low marriage-payment in Kasongi as compared with other areas, and the proximity of Kasongi to Esele country, which has long been a source of supply for slave concubines. (Of the 10 polygynous households in Ngendo 5 contained at least 1 Esele concubine.)(5)

Avoidance between in-laws

602 Mutual respect *(esunbilo)* between the two kin groups involved is considered a necessary basis for a successful marriage, and is the reason given for the various avoidances *(oku liyuvuila)* enjoined upon the principals and their respective relatives. These avoidances may be summarised:-

593 (a) A husband and wife must avoid using each other's names.

602 (b) The term *ndatembo* is used for parents-in-law of either sex, and reciprocally for sons-in-law or daughters-in-law. The term is extended to all those whom one's spouse calls "mother", "father" or "child" (Childs, p.52) and apparently also to those whom one's spouse calls *manu, tatekai* or

(1) Childs, p.54.
(2) Fanis, 1945.
(3) Cashmen, 1944, p.45.
(4) Childs, personal communication.
(5) Childs, page 50.

601 ocisumbo (since Childs states (p.55) that it includes every relative of the generation of the spouse's parents.) *Ndatembo* must avoid: (i) speaking each other's names. This may be accomplished by using the names compounded from those of children (thus *Nakambotia* and *Sakambotia* are the father and mother of Kambotia) or by using the terms which one's spouse uses, i.e. *mai, tate, nanu* etc. (ii) seeing each other, if they are of opposite sex; if it is necessary to converse, it must be done out of sight, or with gaze averted. (iii) eating with each other. (This applies only to regular meals and not to casual refreshment.)

607 (c) The term *nawa* is used reciprocally for all the spouse's relatives of one's own generation, including those classed as "sister", "brother" and "cross-cousin". Between the *nawa* the only avoidance enjoined is that they may not eat regular meals in each other's presence; otherwise they are on "free and easy" terms".

"Avoidance of meeting ... is especially difficult for the bride who comes to live in a village of her husband's people, a large proportion of the men of which may be *ndatembo* to her. The prohibition may be lifted by .. a simple ceremony, in which each rubs a little oil on the other ... Avoidance of eating in each other's presence may be done away with after some months by sacrificing a chicken and feeding it ceremonially .. to the *ndatembo* or *nawa* ... It is especially important that the ceremonies be carried through with respect *(esumbilo)*."(1)

A note on the kinship system

613 421 178 There is a tendency today for the claims of the *olusa*, the land-owning group, to supplant those of the property-owning *oluina*; one important reason for this is the change from trade to agriculture as the most important economic activity. With European influence also conflicts have arisen over rights to children. Childs states(2) that the bilineal kinship system has been a factor leading to social stability, especially stability of marriage, but he does not elaborate this statement.

LOCAL GROUPS(3)

592 595 *The "household"*, consisting of a man, his wife or wives and children, and such other related or unrelated dependants as may be attached to this basic group, is the basis of the village. The word *onjo* (house) may be used for this group, i.e. to include the various houses which a man may have established by marriage, or it may be used for the house of any one of his wives. Each wife has her own hut, granary, chickens, and fields for her children and herself, and the husband has no house of his own unless he is village headman or the head of an *oluina*, in which case he has a spirit-hut *(etambo)* in which he may sometimes pass the night. Sons when they marry form their own households, usually in their father's village. [591] The size of the household varies greatly according to wealth and [554] status. Some recent kings have had as many as 12 wives. But it has been noted above that, in Childs' typical village, out of 48 households only 10

(1) Childs, p.52.
(2) Ibid., p.56; see also ibid. pp.70, 45, 50 etc.
(3) This section is based on Childs, 1949, pp.25-41.

Vakuacisoko (lit. "those of the set")(1) 561

Childs considers that the custom of *vacuacisoko* is probably connected with circumcision and initiation. It does not exist throughout the territory but only in certain families who belong to the order and are said to pass it on by heredity. It seems to have been stronger in the past, but few practising members of the set are now known. All 'coevals' or members of the set were in duty bound to render mutual assistance, and all had mutual rights to the property of the others without complaint or remedy. These rights seem to have included that of having intercourse with each other's wives. Injury or even death of one member brought about by another did not allow the injured family to seek revenge or legal redress. It was the duty of the *vacuacisoko* to bury their fellows, themselves digging the grave and attending to all the expenses ordinarily supplied by the family of the deceased. They also had the duty of burying strangers without family who would not be buried by others for fear of defilement or responsibility for their debts.(2) Childs describes the *vacuacisoko* associations as "age-grade sets",(3) but gives no further explanation. 572

"With or without initiation rites, adolescence is largely preparation for marriage and full adult life. Traditionally, adolescence is not a time of conflict or stress....Contract and *corvée* labour have brought profound changes, especially for the young men. As for the girls, a few have gone into the towns; relatively few, however, other than those who attend a boarding-school, lead a life essentially different from that which has been traditionally theirs."(4) 883 177

MARRIAGE

Available information concerning degrees of relationship in which marriage is permitted, marriage-payment, polygyny and divorce has been given above.(5) Evambi(6) and Hambly(7) describe some of the customs and ceremonies connected with marriage. 582

For three nights after the commencement of the marriage ceremony the girl sleeps with her own parents, while the married woman and six unmarried girls whom she has chosen as her attendants sleep in the house of her husband. On the fourth day she moves to the man's house, bringing her cooking utensils. For the first month, according to Hambly, or, according to Evambi, the first year, i.e. until the grain is ripe in her new fields, she lives with her husband's mother or aunt, in whose kitchen she cooks food each night to send to her husband in the *onjango*. When her first child is two or three months old, a present of a pig passes from the girl's mother to her husband. 585 [606]

Childs(8) adds that adulthood comes with marriage, and marriage is only recognised as complete when the first child has been born. A child or an adolescent is only a "potential" person *(ocunu)* and the permanency 585

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.115.
(2) Those who buried a man were considered responsible for his debts. Hence corpses were often placed in trees.
(3) Childs, op.cit., p.59.
(4) Ibid., p.117.
(5) Pp.20f.
(6) 1938.
(7) 1934, pp 180f.
(8) Op.cit., pp.119-20.

3: Hambly E-8 (1929-1930) 1934 FF13 Mbunda FF13

Nganga actually has a brother by his father's first wife, and for this male he uses the same terms as for his uterine brothers. The same terms are used for uterine sisters and sisters begotten by his father through wives other than his uterine mother. Nganga said, "If people ask you which sister or which brother you can explain it in words."

A wife of Nganga's father, other than Nganga's uterine mother, is called *mai yesepaksi*; that is, "the mother who is jealous of my mother." *Mai* means "mother," and the remainder of the term is a derivative from the word *esepa*, meaning "woman's jealousy." If two women *A* and *B* desire to marry the same man and only *A* is successful, *B* calls *A* *sepaksi*. Under similar circumstances a man would call his successful rival *cikuelume cose*.

There is a distinct word for man's jealousy. In explaining this Nganga said, "When I see my wife look at another man, I have *ukuelume* ["man's jealousy"] in my heart."

If on the death of Nganga's father, his mother married again this male would be called by Nganga *tate yesepaksi* ("the father who is jealous").

A wife calls the children of the family, who are not her own, *omalo vesepaksi*; that is, "the children who are jealous of the other children." A mother-in-law taboo operates. Conversation between mother-in-law and son-in-law must always be carried on while the speakers stand back to back.

The foregoing note on a mother-in-law taboo has been supplemented by a letter from Dr. Merlin W. Ennis of Elende, Angola (August, 1931). "Mother-in-law and father-in-law taboos seem to be directed against seeing each other. The persons involved may not see each other. If they meet on the path, one steps aside and turns the back while the other passes on. The one passing by goes through the motions of seeing no one. If it is necessary to converse on some subject, they sit looking in different directions, or one sits out of doors and the other within, around the corner of the door. This holds equally for a man and his son's wife, and for a woman and her daughter's husband. A man may see and talk with his daughter's husband, and a woman may see and speak to her son's wife, but no son-in-law may eat with a father-in-law, likewise daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law may not eat together. Brothers-in-law may not eat together unless they have gone through a certain ceremony; this also holds for sisters-in-law."

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

have a kinsman's obligation to lend money in case of need if he has it, and it is said that one should only work very occasionally with a brother-in-law. When I asked which a woman preferred, her husband or her brother, men told me that she liked both equally, and the fact that a man and his wife's brother often live close together confirms that there is relatively little for them to quarrel over. A woman does not establish close ties with any of her affines. Formerly, when a man died leaving a widow (and according to some informants a small child) a patrilateral cross-cousin of his might marry her. My informants, however, denied that a sororate had existed even in the past.[1]

Cross-cousins are the relatives with whom solidarity is most strongly felt. When I asked about the relationship between full siblings I was told 'They like each other just as cross-cousins do.' Now that it is no longer customary for agnatic kin to live together, it is often said that it is good to live near cross-cousins.

Formerly funeral friendship (*akwetjiseka*) was part of an alliance between sub-chiefdoms, which were not contiguous. Nowadays, since people move about the country, funeral friendships may be regarded as another category of kinship—when one asks a man his relationship with somebody else this may be given. There is a tendency to regard *akwetjiseka*, funeral friends, as being a sort of cross-cousins since both perform funeral services. This survival of funeral friendship, as a tie between individuals and as a haphazard means of supplying undertakers, exists in Gumba. In Ndjandju, which is the sub-chiefdom in which the Missão Católica de Bimbe is built, the *tjiseka* relationship is now established between two neighbouring villages and is apparently the normal means of performing burials, and the permitted theft of small livestock regularly takes place.

Between parents-in-law and children-in-law the relation was and is one of restraint. This is most marked in the relations between in-laws of opposite sex, and least between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

[1] See *Alfaias Alves* under *(o)nakapandje*, for evidence of a sororate in some Umbundu areas.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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man has four daughters he will receive the bridewealth only for the two oldest. The mother's brother will receive the bridewealth for the third sister and a brother for the fourth. If the father is dead, the payment is made to a mother's brother or a brother real or classificatory. To some extent the size of the bridewealth is a reflection of the status of the girl—thus on the railway line 1,000 escudos (£12. 10s.) might be paid for a girl who could read and write. In my own area a Gumba man might pay more for a girl from Ndjandju than for a Cela girl because Ndjandju is regarded, owing to its proximity to the mission, as being more civilized. There exist also counter-gifts. Ndjoleya, who as mother's brother received the bridewealth for Feliciana, gave a pig to Daniel, and it is customary for a pig to be given to the husband by his wife's father on the birth of their first child.[11]

The Umbundu word for marriage *oku kwela* is applied both to customary marriage and to Christian marriage. To distinguish between the two, Portuguese words are taken over, *amigar* (originally, to live in concubinage) being used for the customary marriage, and *casar* (to marry) being used for marriage in church. The use of *amigar* of a particular marriage implies that the people making it are pagans, or Christians who have omitted the church ceremony for one reason or another. In Gumba the church marriage, while it gives status among Christians is not an important occasion in the local milieu, and people who have been through the church marriage but who have not made the *onala*, the traditional wedding feast, are not permitted by their senior kin to cohabit. Around the mission the church ceremony is regarded as the important thing, and the *onala* seems to be thought of simply as a party. Traditionally and usually at the present day the *onala* is held in the dry season.

In the wedding feast there are a number of variations between one occasion and another, but a general outline can

[11] Hastings, p. 110, states that a year or two after the birth of the first child another pig is given which is called the pig of cutting off. The giving and the accepting of this severs all responsibilities between the families. The widows can no more be returned to her father's people for misdemeanour—only in the case of the death of her husband will she be taken back.